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T ELEVISION AND THE 1956 CAMPAIGN

by

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TELEVISION AND THE 1956 CAMPAIGN

APPROACH of another presidential election focuses attention on the part that television may play in deciding the outcome of the political contest and in promoting public understanding of the questions at issue in the campaign. The extent to which television lives up to its possibilities in those respects in 1956 may depend on the extent to which certain federal restrictions are modified. In the opinion of the broadcasting industry and many lay observers, current provisions of law governing the granting of free or equal time to political candidates stand in the way of achieving maximum public benefit from TV in election campaigns.

It is probable that proposals to revise the Federal Communications Act as it affects political broadcasting will be given careful consideration at the next session of Congress. Such proposals are expected to be taken up in connection with a forthcoming general inquiry into the affairs of the radio and television industry. The Senate Commerce Committee will launch the inquiry with public hearings scheduled to open Jan. 17, 1956.

Since 1946, when television was a novelty available to only 10,000 families in the eastern part of the country, it has developed into a major nation-wide medium of information and entertainment. More than 35 million receiving sets, fed by four national networks and some 400 individual telecasting stations, are in use today. Nine out of ten families live in areas where programs can be received from at least one TV outlet.

It was inevitable that a communications device capable of reaching so many people should become a major instrument for political combat. President Eisenhower, speaking informally to the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters on May 25, 1955, mentioned broadcasting's growing power "in swaying public opinion." He called radio and television "a mighty force in our civiliza-

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tion, one that is certain to grow . . . and be more powerful in its influence upon all of us."

TV'S POWER TO BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN CANDIDATES

The political parties are fully aware of the potentialities of the new medium. The *Republican Campaign Manual* for 1952 said: "Television and radio are assuming increasing importance in every political campaign and no campaign manager can afford to overlook their value in bringing the Republican Party's message into the voter's homes. The extra effort and skill they require pay off at the ballot box." Chairman Leonard Hall of the Republican National Committee told the National Federation of Republican Women in Washington on March 1: "We must choose able and personable candidates who can 'sell themselves' because TV has changed the course of campaigns." Hall added that television had destroyed the power of special interests to deliver blocs of votes; elections now are being won in the living rooms of individual voters.

The Democratic National Committee's handbook for candidates, *A Campaign Guide to Political Publicity*, refers to television as a "spectacular weapon," possibly "your most important campaign tool." It reminds candidates that in five minutes they can "visit more families in their living rooms" than could be seen "in a month of personal calls." Television offers the unknown contender "the quickest route to becoming a live flesh-and-blood personality in the minds of the voters."

Candidates are urged not only to buy video time, but also to seek guest appearances on non-political programs. The Republican manual notes that free appearances "ease the burden on the party organization's hard-pressed treasury," and "enable the candidate to get his message across to established program audiences, many of whom might be reluctant to listen to straight political programs."

During the 1954 congressional campaign, *Newsweek* reported: "Campaign managers the country over were asking themselves that fateful question: 'How does he project?' more often than they were worrying over their candidates' voting records or hand-shaking ability. . . . Today's politician is now convinced that one picture is worth 10,000 of radio's words."¹

¹ "Vote for Me on TV," *Newsweek*, Nov. 1, 1954, p. 58.

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Some political observers believe that an 18-hour telethon, staged on the eve of the 1950 election by Gov. Dewey to answer questions telephoned in by TV viewers, was largely responsible for his overwhelming victory in New York that year. Televised hearings of the Senate Crime Investigating Committee in 1951 gave the committee chairman, Sen. Kefauver (D-Tenn.), publicity that helped to promote his bid for the presidential nomination the following year. When the Democrats nominated Adlai Stevenson, television assisted in making a relatively unknown candidate familiar to the nation within a few weeks.

The Democratic handbook cautions that while "good use of TV can give your campaign a tremendous lift, . . . mediocre use of TV can do . . . tremendous harm." Many persons think the late Sen. Taft's lack of "TV appeal" contributed to his failure to win the 1952 Republican nomination. Withering of Sen. McCarthy's popular support, as the televised inquiry into his dispute with Army Secretary Stevens progressed in the spring of 1954, doubtless had some bearing on the stiffening of administration opposition to the Wisconsin Republican and on his condemnation by the Senate later in the year.

PROJECTION OF PERSONALITY THROUGH TELEVISION

When President Eisenhower talked to the broadcasters' association last May, he noted that television contributes a great deal toward informing the public. Then he said that it brings "something different . . . you introduce personality as well as cold fact." The Democrats' publicity guidebook points out that the candidate on TV should demonstrate not only his knowledge of issues but also his "winning personality." The booklet advises: "The idea is to get the viewers to like you, listen to you and vote for you. The way to do that is to appear a likable and admirable human being."

The effective TV campaigner today is not a silver-tongued orator but a pleasant, relaxed fellow who would be welcome in the average family circle. He must not be a long-winded bore. A 30-minute, or even 15-minute, speech is considered too long for the average campaigner; five minutes is deemed ample time for him to display his grasp of the issues.

A broadcasting industry handbook for politicians refers to TV as an "intimate medium" and suggests that "Your

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talents as a flowery orator must now be replaced with informal, sincere conversation."² Even before the 1952 campaign, radio-television columnist John Crosby commented: "The old-time politicians, accustomed to projecting their personalities clear into the second balcony, are going to have a terrible time adjusting themselves to the new technique"; in the future, they must forgo their "florid prose style and arm-flailing."³ The Democrats' guidebook advises candidates to "avoid straight speeches"; they should act as if they were "visiting the homes of some nice people who don't know you very well."

SHOWMANSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR TV CAMPAIGNING

Present-day candidates for public office are uncomfortably aware of the fact that "On TV, politics must compete with news and entertainment programs," and that "If the viewer is bored he will tune to another channel."⁴ According to radio-television columnist Jack Gould: "The public figure of today has awakened to a new and difficult truth: if he is not to perish in obscurity, sooner or later he must go before the cameras of television. . . . For better or worse, he is a performer, and showmanship is now a factor in his and the country's life."⁵

The candidate may need make-up and he may have to restrain habitual gestures. By using a prompting device he may achieve an appearance of speaking extemporaneously while actually reading from a panel unseen by the audience. He must become skilled in turning his gaze at the proper times to the appropriate camera.

Disclosure that President Eisenhower relies on the actor-director, Robert Montgomery, to coach him for television appearances has given sanction to similar striving for technical polish by men in lesser office. Although the President is considered to have a natural TV personality, politicians are impressed by the fact that he nevertheless is willing to take lessons from a professional performer.

An effective political presentation on television must be a planned program—not merely a movie of a man making a

² National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters, *Campaigning on TV* (1952).

³ John Crosby, "Television and the 1952 Election," *American Magazine*, April 1952, p. 21.

⁴ Democratic National Committee, *A Campaign Guide to Political Publicity*, p. 7.

⁵ Jack Gould, "TV Techniques on the Political Stage," *New York Times Magazine*, Apr. 25, 1954, p. 12.

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speech. If a candidate is speaking about national defense, for example, he may dub in official films of aircraft or atomic explosions. Short documentary films, such as one on the atomic-powered submarine, *Nautilus*, have been prepared by the Joint Senate and House Radio Facility in the U. S. Capitol,⁶ and members of Congress may add introductory remarks appropriate to their political affiliations. The films then are offered to local stations in the members' districts for showing on public-service programs.

The Republican Congressional Committee has produced filmed interviews with cabinet officers, and any congressman may be independently pictured asking the appropriate questions, so that the completed film for video use gives the impression of a face-to-face chat.

Although showmanship is not new in politics, its use in broadcasting introduces a different element in the contest for votes. Traditional torchlight parades and high-jinks were largely for the entertainment of party cohorts, but political telecasts are intended to gain the attention of viewers who may not favor the sponsoring party. Political entertainment on TV is aimed to sell the candidate or a party proposal to the individual citizen rather than to fire the enthusiasm of the party workers.

The Democrats, at the height of the New Deal, were the first to use radio to put on shows with famous entertainers, and climax them with a message from their candidate, as a means of winning a mass audience for a political objective. Television simply adds another dimension to this type of entertainment-campaigning and vastly enlarges the potential audience.⁷

HIGH COST OF USING TELEVISION AS CAMPAIGN MEDIUM

Television adds considerably to the cost of political campaigning, but it has the inestimable advantage of making a candidate visible, in a single appearance, to a vast number of voters. Both the vote-winning potentialities of the medium and the high cost of using it make practical a shortening of political campaigns. In fact, it was largely because

⁶ The radio facility was established in 1936 and television equipment added in 1953. Congress employs a professional supervisor to aid members in preparing radio or TV programs at cost.

⁷ Many objections have been raised to use of so-called "soap-selling" tactics in political telecasts. Sen. Neuberger (D-Ore.) introduced a bill last spring to require that the audience be informed when a candidate is using make-up and when he is reading from a prompting device.

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the major parties wanted to make greater use of TV, and at the same time were keenly aware of the expense involved, that they decided to defer the opening of the presidential nominating conventions of 1956—the Democratic meeting to Aug. 13, three weeks later, and the Republican meeting to Aug. 20, six weeks later than in 1952.

Republican National Committee Chairman Hall told a Senate committee last spring that “if we ran again from July to November,” the costs would be staggering. He forecast increased spending on television in 1956, but said that “the saving we make by the short campaign may . . . bring us out about even.”⁸ Approximately one-fifth of total expenditures by the national party committees in the presidential campaign of 1952 was for television and radio time—\$645,125 in the case of the Republicans and \$375,693 in the case of the Democrats. State and other political committees and groups devoted a considerably larger share of their funds to broadcasting.

CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURES FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO, 1952*

	Television	Radio
Republican	\$1,643,910	\$1,803,826
Democratic	1,303,917	1,269,660
Progressive	1,546	7,747
Socialist Labor	778	13,596
Independent	750	3,620
Liberal	428	1,525
Prohibition		4,448
American Labor		3,987
Socialist		1,520
Socialist Worker		1,121
Total	2,951,329	3,111,050

* Amounts represent totals received by 3,000 television and radio stations from candidates for federal elective office and their campaign committees.

SOURCE: Senate Rules Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections.

Rates for TV time vary according to the size of the potential audience within range of the video outlets at a particular period of the day or night. Under rate schedules in effect April 1, 1955, the charge for one hour on the basic National Broadcasting Company network of 53 stations, during an “A” or premium period, was \$62,675; a “B” hour cost \$47,000 and a “C” hour \$31,337. The fee for a 15-minute period was \$25,000, \$18,802, or \$12,535, depending

⁸ Use of television permits not only a shortening of campaigns but also major reductions in expenditures for travel and for campaign paraphernalia. An N.E.C. official has estimated that if a TV program reaches only two adults in one-fourth of the homes within range of the stations, the cost of a half-hour telecast still amounts to only three-tenths of a cent per viewer.

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on the time classification.⁹ Rates of individual TV stations for a single premium hour range from above \$6,000 for a large New York City outlet down to as little as \$100 for an outlet in a small community. If a political program pre-empts the time of a commercial telecast, additional costs may be incurred to recompense actors, advertising agents, and others to whom the broadcasting company is obligated.¹⁰

The Democratic National Committee has estimated that a 20-second to one-minute evening spot on a local TV station, in cities of from 50,000 to 250,000 population, will cost a congressional candidate from \$40 to \$151. A sample campaign budget allows for purchase of at least 14 TV periods, during the eight weeks preceding election, to enable the candidate "to make a sufficient impact via television." The typical candidate would devote about one-fourth of a campaign budget of \$10,000 to TV: \$1,732 for 14 programs of five to 15 minutes each and \$900 for 30 one-minute spots.

Growing Use of Television in Politics

TELEVISION first figured in a national election in 1948, but at that time there were only 700,000 receiving sets and 41 telecasting stations. No national networks had been established. Sectional networks covered the two major nominating conventions in Philadelphia and a Republican National Committee rally and a Truman rally in Madison Square Garden, New York. Local television stations covered the Progressive third-party convention, and various TV news programs included summaries and highlights of the three conventions and the campaigns. Relatively little video time was bought by political organizations. N.B.C. reported only one paid political speech over its network during the entire 1948 presidential campaign.

By mid-1952 more than 18 million receiving sets had been

⁹ Class A time covers the hours from 6 to 11 P.M., Monday through Friday, and from 5 to 11 P.M., Saturday and Sunday; Class B time runs from 5 to 6 P.M., Monday through Friday, and from 1 to 5 P.M., Saturday and Sunday; Class C time includes all other hours. Rates for Class B time amount to 75 per cent, and for Class C time to 50 per cent, of premium rates. Half-hour periods cost 60 per cent, quarter-hour periods 40 per cent, and five-minute periods 25 per cent of the full hourly rate.

¹⁰ Competition of television has brought down the cost of radio time. Rates for a half-hour evening period on N.B.C.'s network fell from \$9,911 in 1952 to \$8,622 in May 1955.

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sold, and 112 telecasting stations were in operation in 66 market areas. Studies indicated that three significant segments of the electorate could be reached by television: big-city, medium-sized county, and rural voters. Surveys disclosed that around 70 million persons had watched some parts of the telecasts of the two nominating conventions.

The effectiveness of television as a campaign instrument had been demonstrated in the mid-term election of 1950. Republican headquarters consequently urged 1952 Republican candidates to make fullest use of the new medium. It issued a guide, *ABC of Getting the Most Out of TV*, in which Guy Gabrielson, then chairman of the National Committee, wrote: "Television's impact . . . will be so great that it must command our earnest attention as a political force."

TELECASTING OF THE 1952 NOMINATING CONVENTIONS

In 1952 for the first time a majority of the American people was able to follow the sights and sounds of a presidential campaign, from primaries to election, without stirring from home. The 1952 campaign was the first also in which the paid political telecast figured prominently. Radio had been a significant electioneering instrument since 1924, but the visual broadcast obviously had superior audience-holding powers. Surveys indicated that the 1952 conventions were listened to in only one-third of the radio homes of the country but watched in more than two-thirds of the television homes.

TV cameras had followed presidential aspirants into the key primary campaigns in New Hampshire, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin. During pre-convention weeks, many TV stations carried special programs on major issues and personalities. Meanwhile, there was wide speculation over the possible effects of the new factor on the political life of the nation.

Supporters of some prospective candidates considered very seriously the possibility that the appearance and manner of a candidate, given access to television and 70 million people, might well offset the power of well-oiled political machines. . . . Editorials were already predicting that the presidential election would be won and lost on the air. . . . At every turn, there were evidences of the superlative political belief that sight-and-sound reporting on a nation-wide scale could sway votes as they had never been swayed before.¹¹

¹¹ Department of Marketing, Miami University, Oxford, O., *The Influence of Television on the Election of 1952*, December 1954, p. 5.

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On the eve of the conventions columnist John Crosby commented: "Television could very easily elect the next President of the United States. It could, on the other hand, defeat a potential President."

At the Republican convention television proved itself to be a ubiquitous reporter. Because of the camera's up-front seat and its mobility, it gave the home viewer a more comprehensive picture of what was going on than that obtained by delegates in the convention hall. "Television caught intimate close-ups . . . eavesdropped on private remarks . . . even found itself a place in the convention drama and, with the aid of thousands of telegrams from angry viewers, it stormed the 'closed door' of the sessions of the credentials committee."¹²

Reporters and commentators moved about the hall in search of scoops and feature interviews. Arrows, frames, flashes, bulletins, and close-ups were superimposed on long shots of the convention hall to dramatize the proceedings for the TV audience.

TV STRATEGY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1952

After the conventions, television continued to give full news coverage of the campaign, and the airwaves were used extensively for paid political programs. The Republicans, with a presidential candidate already well known to the public, concentrated on regional and local telecasts of programs stressing party policies of particular appeal in the respective areas. The Democrats sought the aid of television to popularize a relatively obscure candidate as rapidly as possible. Eisenhower made only three network TV appearances, as against 11 by Stevenson, in the first seven weeks of the campaign.

Use of television was stepped up in the final weeks of the campaign. The G.O.P., with larger funds at its command, arranged for a host of short spot announcements to plug candidates and policies. On election eve the Republican National Committee booked the time from 10 to 10:30 P.M. on two national networks and from 11 P.M. to 12 midnight on all four national networks. The programs consisted largely of endorsements of its candidate by a variety of persons from many walks of life, including Democrats who had switched to Eisenhower.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

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Post-election studies indicated that the balance of public sentiment was too heavily weighted in Eisenhower's favor, before the campaign started, to be overcome by any means, but that Stevenson gained markedly in the latter part of the canvass. Analyzing sample surveys among voters, Miami University at Oxford, O., found that one-third of the votes cast for Stevenson were won in the final month. "This strong finish . . . can be taken as a first observation of the relatively greater benefit which Stevenson obtained from television." Although "the results apparently would have been the same, with or without this new, and as yet untested, means of political communication . . . [this] is not to say . . . that the medium did not have some influence."¹³

USE OF TELEVISION BY EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

Some of the early extravagant claims about television's power to sway elections are no longer repeated, but use of the medium still is considered indispensable to success in politics—not only as an aid to campaigning but also as a means of keeping in touch with constituents between elections.

President Eisenhower has lent prestige to use of television by men in public life. He is the first President to be seen frequently on the video screen, the first to appear on programs specially staged for TV presentation, and the first to present himself to the public in the currently approved informal manner. Although telecasts of Eisenhower and other government officials are not regarded as political programs, their contribution to strengthening support of the party in power is fully recognized by party managers.

Roosevelt made masterly use of radio, particularly in his "fireside chats" which foreshadowed the person-to-person TV approach now in vogue. Truman scarcely exploited the possibilities of the visual broadcast. Most of his appearances on television were for the purpose of delivering a formal address, which he usually read from a visible script. Many persons have noted that the only time Truman's personality was fully projected on television was when he conducted a TV tour of the renovated White House.

Returning from a tour of N.A.T.O. capitals, shortly after assuming the post of Supreme Allied Commander in Europe,

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

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Eisenhower on Feb. 2, 1951, delivered a TV report to the American people. Some observers consider that this appearance, in which the message was read from lettered cards beyond camera range, effectively launched the general as a potential presidential candidate. *Television Age* has recalled that Eisenhower's earnest delivery made "a sledgehammer impression on those who saw it and heard it."¹⁴

As President, Eisenhower has made increasing and experimental use of television. For the benefit of the video audience he has staged special "cabinet meetings," summarized a State of the Union address, and explained tax and fiscal policies with the aid of pointer and charts. Since Jan. 19, 1955, TV cameras have been regularly admitted to White House news conferences.¹⁵ Special occasions covered by TV have included the President's signing last year of the St. Lawrence seaway bill and a farewell ceremony this year in honor of retiring Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Hobby.

Television has contributed greatly to the popular impression of President Eisenhower as a warm-hearted, sincere, courteous, earnest, and plain-spoken man. James Hagerty, the President's press secretary, is reported to have said: "I am not unaware that this [television] does a darn good job of selling the President to the people."¹⁶

TELEVISION PLANS AND PROSPECTS FOR 1956 CAMPAIGN

Campaigners in the autumn of 1956 will have access to a far larger television audience than was available for the 1952 presidential campaign. Twice as many TV sets are already in use, and the number of market areas receiving telecasts has increased from 66 to 250. An N.B.C. official has estimated that by Jan. 1, 1956, there will be 38½ million receivers in 270 markets, served by 435 commercial stations.

Televising the conventions next year will be far more costly than in 1952, chiefly because equipment will have to be installed in San Francisco as well as in Chicago. Broadcasters estimate that failure of the two major parties to hold their conventions in the same place will cost each of the four networks an additional quarter of a million dollars.

¹⁴ "Eisenhower, tv President," *Television Age*, May 1955, p. 46.

¹⁵ The White House retains the right to withhold release of any part of the film of televised news conferences.

¹⁶ "Eisenhower, tv President," *Television Age*, May 1955, p. 46.

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Although a part of the added expenditure may be recovered from commercial sponsors, the companies say that receipts from sponsors did not fully cover costs of the 1952 telecasts.

Preliminary discussions between representatives of the networks and the major parties have already been held. An N.B.C. official told a Senate committee last spring that his network had "sought within our own organization to break new ground to help solve some of the problems as candidates and committees see them."¹⁷ He said the network had introduced four innovations to attain the "dual objectives of reducing costs and creating flexibility" in TV campaigning:

1. N.B.C. will withhold from commercial sale certain time periods to be devoted to major speeches by presidential candidates. Firm orders for such periods must be placed no later than next May to avoid the extra expense of pre-empting the time of commercial programs.
2. The network will shorten commercial one-hour and half-hour programs to accommodate one or five-minute political spots. Such periods also should be reserved months in advance.
3. The network for the first time will sell one-minute periods for political broadcasts in established variety programs.
4. Local stations owned by N.B.C. will sell similar short periods.

The decision to offer one and five-minute periods, the N.B.C. official said, "revolved around the fact that it is appropriate for the public to listen to Gov. Stevenson or President Eisenhower for a half hour . . . but for other candidates . . . five minutes would be very appropriate, particularly at the end of a regular program, because then he [the candidate] inherits . . . the audience built up, let us say, by George Gobel."

¹⁷ Joseph V. Heffernan, financial vice president, National Broadcasting Company, testimony before Senate Rules Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections, Apr. 26, 1953.

Campaign Regulations and Television

TELEVISION has rendered obsolete some of the ground rules laid down by Congress to protect the public interest in use of the air and to prevent corrupt practices in elections. For example, ceilings placed on campaign expenditures, long under pressure from the general rise in prices, have been made completely unrealistic by the apparent need to include costly TV programs in the campaign budget.

Under the Hatch Act of 1939, political committees were forbidden to receive or spend more than \$3 million a year. The Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925 placed campaign expenditure ceilings of \$10,000 on candidates for the Senate and \$2,500 on candidates for the House of Representatives. Alternatively, they were allowed to spend amounts equivalent to 3c for each vote cast at the last preceding general election for the office in question, up to maximums of \$25,000 in Senate and \$5,000 in House contests.

Outdating of the foregoing limits, even before the advent of television, made it common practice to piece out electioneering funds with contributions not directly a part of a candidate's own campaign budget. The law did not prevent formation of any number of "citizens' committees" or other groups to raise and spend money independently in behalf of favored candidates. As a result, there were no really effective limits on campaign spending. Estimates of actual expenditures in the 1952 campaign range from \$50 million to \$100 million, although the reportable amounts totaled only \$17.5 million for the presidential and \$5.6 million for the congressional races.¹⁸

At the opening of hearings on proposals to revise the laws governing election practices, April 12, 1955, Chairman Hennings (D-Mo.) of the Senate Rules Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections referred to the part played by broadcasting costs in promoting widespread avoidance of limitations on campaign spending:

We know that tremendous amounts of money are spent in election campaigns . . . oftentimes far in excess of what the law intends. . . . Actually these laws are so inadequate, so antiquated and so riddled with loopholes that they invite . . . or demand evasion. . . .

¹⁸ Political committees are required to submit financial statements to the Clerk of the House of Representatives only if they operate in two or more states.

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The limits placed on campaign spending by these laws are so low that few candidates can campaign on what the law allows in this day of widespread and costly television and radio.

The Rules Committee reported a bill on June 22 to allow substantial increases in expenditures by political committees and candidates for federal office. It would attempt to make the proposed limits overall ceilings by requiring that all expenditures in behalf of, as well as directly by, a candidate be included in his total, and by forbidding any group other than the regular party organizations to collect or spend funds in behalf of a candidate without his authorization.¹⁹ Expenditure limits would apply to funds spent in primaries as well as in final elections. The effect of the measure might be to cut total spending on television and radio, because the limitations would apply to funds of citizens' groups, which frequently have been devoted in large part to broadcasting.²⁰ The Senate took no action on the proposed legislation at the 1955 session.

The question of the right of labor unions to use television or radio to support political candidates is currently due for court hearing. A federal grand jury on July 20 indicted the United Automobile Workers on a charge of violating a Taft-Hartley ban on union expenditures in connection with elections for public office. The charge was based on an expenditure by U.A.W. of \$5,985 for TV programs in support of Democratic candidates for Congress in 1954. Walter Reuther, president of U.A.W., said the union welcomed "a test on the constitutional right of a labor union to express its point of view on political issues . . . through the purchase and use of radio and television time."²¹

PROPOSALS FOR FREE TV TIME FOR CAMPAIGNERS

The Federal Communications Act does not require broadcasting stations to carry any political programs, free or for compensation. However, if a station opens its facilities to one candidate, it must make an equivalent period of time available to other contenders for the same office—free if no

¹⁹ Expenditures by citizens' groups for presidential or vice presidential candidates were exempted in order to permit drafting of candidates who "might not be in a position to openly authorize committees to seek the nomination in their behalf."

²⁰ For instance, more than 90 per cent of the funds of the Stevenson-Sparkman Forum Committee, amounting to nearly \$700,000, was spent in 1952 on TV and radio.

²¹ Major labor organizations have set up separate "educational" affiliates to propagate union views on public issues. The Supreme Court has not passed on either the legality of this procedure, as concerns political campaigning, or the constitutionality of the statutory ban on union political expenditures.

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charge was made for the time in the first place, or at the same rate if it was paid for. In the latter case, the right to equivalent time naturally can be availed of only if the candidate or his backers can afford to pay.

The advantage accorded by a well-filled campaign chest, in combination with politically potent TV, has given rise to various proposals to make broadcasting facilities available without charge to all campaigners. The Hennings subcommittee devoted a considerable part of its hearings on election reform last spring to that question, but it made no recommendations "because of the many problems which would arise from such a [free-time] system."

Chairman Butler of the Democratic National Committee said he thought the suggestion to require broadcasters to provide free time had "a great deal of merit," because it would "tend to lessen the reliance of both parties upon the contributions from individuals or organizations who . . . might expect some favor in return." Butler believed, however, that it would be difficult for national political organizations to allocate available time to the various candidates. The broadcasting industry objected to being shouldered with a burden not imposed on other campaign media, such as newspapers, assembly halls, and transportation companies. It objected in principle also to additional government regulation of the content of broadcasts.

Former F.C.C. Commissioner Frieda Hennock supported free-time proposals by pointing out that radio and television are unique among mass media in that they are in the public domain, subject to government regulation, and already obligated to provide a reasonable amount of time for public service programs. Advance planning, she said, might relieve broadcasters of excessive costs that may be incurred now when they give free time to campaigners. However, she recommended that if the plans proved unduly costly to the industry, the federal government should compensate the broadcasters.

The cost of free radio and TV campaigning, to the industry or to the taxpayer, would depend on the amount of time allocated. Richard S. Salant, vice president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, estimated that one-half hour a week for a presidential candidate would cost \$400,000 for an eight-week period. If WCBS-TV in New York City were required to give one-half hour a week to each of the

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105 congressional candidates who participated in the 1954 contests in districts served by that outlet, the revenue loss to the one station would amount to around \$500,000. Salant estimated that the total cost to all stations and networks, radio and TV, would run to between \$30 million and \$50 million in a presidential election year and to between \$7.5 million and \$15 million in a mid-term campaign.

PROBLEMS POSED BY EQUAL-TIME REQUIREMENT

Radio and television stations customarily devote considerable time to discussions of political issues by public officials, either in commercially-sponsored or in unsponsored public service programs. But such programs, and programs featuring candidates for elective office, tend to dry up during a campaign period. Broadcasters are reluctant to give free time to one candidate because, if they do so, they must then give free time to all other candidates for the same office.

Pointing out that 18 political parties put up candidates for the presidency in 1952,²² Salant told the Hennings subcommittee that if a network granted a half-hour premium period a week to a major-party presidential candidate, it might be required to devote as many as eight of the 21 prime evening hours in a week to speeches by candidates "most of whom nobody is interested in."

Broadcasting could not survive for long because the audience would disappear fast. . . . We can lose our audience in a hurry by inserting a half hour in evening time which attracts no listeners—and once lost . . . it is hard to lure the audience back to our place in the dial. . . . We have . . . been forced, as a matter of simple common sense, . . . to adopt the policy that once the campaign actually begins, we cannot give time free to candidates; we must sell it at regular rates.

Like considerations apply to the pre-convention period. An obscure Missourian, who filed for the Republican presidential nomination in the 1952 New Hampshire and Oregon primaries and received a total of 573 votes in the two states, demanded and perforce was granted equal time on the air with other aspirants. Salant commented: "I am sure that you can readily appreciate why in 1956 we are going to have to think twice before we provide as comprehensive

²² Parties which nominated presidential candidates in 1952, in addition to the Republican and Democratic, were the American, American Rally, Christian Nationalist, Church of God Bible, Constitution, Greenback, Poor Man's, Progressive, Prohibition, Republican, Socialist Labor, Socialist, Socialist Workers, Spiritual, Vegetarian, and Washington Peace parties.

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coverage to candidates for the nominations as we did in 1952."

C.B.S. President Frank Stanton for some time has urged amendment of the Federal Communications Act to exempt news and discussion programs, produced by a studio's own staff, from the equal-time provision—and so extend to broadcasters the editorial freedom enjoyed by newspapers and magazines. The types of programs to be freed from equal-time demands would include news, interviews, documentaries, panel discussions, debates and the like. The equal-time requirement still would apply to programs developed by candidates or political organizations.

Such a modification of existing law would open the way for televised debates by leading political candidates, including candidates for the presidency. It would place on the broadcasting stations more responsibility for distributing the resources of the media equitably among newsworthy candidates. Stanton contends that such an amendment would permit the broadcasting industry to do a better job of informing the public on the major issues of a political campaign.

One way to deal with the equal-time dilemma would be to allot broadcasting periods to campaigners on the basis of the voting strength shown by them or by their parties in the preceding election. In the British election last May air time was rationed to the various parties according to such a plan, and all other political discussion on the air was banned in the three-week electioneering period.²³ The disadvantage of such a system is that it denies new parties a fair chance to build up strength. In eras of political transition a restriction of that kind might have serious results. Sen. Hennings has remarked that if television had been developed in 1860, such a rule might have barred Lincoln from using it. Fiorello LaGuardia's Fusion party may-orality campaign in New York two decades ago might have been similarly handicapped.

NEED FOR STUDY OF POLITICAL BROADCASTING RULES

Problems inherent in developing regulations suitable to modern methods of campaigning are so complex that it is

²³ The Conservative and Labor parties were each allowed four 20-minute radio periods and three TV periods totaling one hour, while the Liberal party was allowed one 20-minute radio and one 15-minute TV period.

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sometimes suggested that a special commission be created to explore them thoroughly. Former F.C.C. Commissioner Hennock has proposed that the President appoint a commission of "distinguished men and women with civic and political experience" to draw up recommendations for revising rules on use of the airwaves for political purposes.

The networks would like to be freed from the hazard of severe revenue losses in covering newsworthy political events, such as Vice President Nixon's defense of his political integrity during the 1952 campaign. Other problems stem from the tendency of the party out of power to demand equal time to answer broadcasts and telecasts by federal officials.

Broadcasters seek immunity from liability for defamatory statements in political broadcasts, which the stations have no power to censor. Another question needing study concerns the proposed extension to broadcasters of the right, possessed by newspapers, to editorialize on public issues. Most of these questions go back to fundamental principles, not fully covered by existing law, which involve safeguarding of the public interest in use of the public domain.

